United Nations ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2018/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 February 2018

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

UNECE Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Twenty-fourth session
Geneva, 30 April and 1 May 2018
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Reports of rapporteurs

Report of the Rapporteur for Africa

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Rapporteur for Africa has conducted several activities to promote UN/CEFACT work and e-commerce throughout Africa. This report contains the activities of the Rapporteur and the activities of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AACE), which is the formalized organization dealing with trade facilitation and Single Window in the African region.

II. Activities conducted by the Rapporteur

A. Participation at the 29th UN/CEFACT plenary and forum, March 2017, Geneva

2. During the Geneva UN/CEFACT forum, Cameroon, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal participated. Initial discussion for the Single Submission Portal (SSP) project were conducted. More and more interest and involvement for UN/CEFACT works it noted by African countries through the continuous involvement of AACE in UN/CEFACT activities and both side.

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B. Participation at the Global E-Commerce Summit, 12-14 June 2017, Barcelona

3. ECommerce Foundation organized a workshop alongside the E-Commerce Summit to launch the concept of the Safe.Shop label. The Rapporteur was invited to present the situation of African e-commerce. The label was initiated to allow Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to better perform in e-commerce and to overcome the challenge of trust. More than 10 countries throughout the world have expressed interest in this initiative. The initiative went live last quarter.

C. Participation at the Digital Trade-Related Provisions in Regional Trade Agreements: Existing Models and Lessons for the Multilateral Trade System Dialogue Series, 13 July 2017, Geneva

4. The Rapporteur was invited to make a presentation on the situation of e-commerce in Africa. This meeting was organized by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) based in Geneva. The Rapporteur has focused his interventions on the obstacles to the expansion of e-commerce in Africa and the recommendations to improve the situation.

D. Participation at the 10th West Africa Internet Governance Forum, organized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 27- 28 July, Benin

5. A paper on e-commerce was prepared by the Rapporteur of E-commerce. The West African countries have discussed many areas of the digital economy which should be handled jointly. The secretariat of ECOWAS is motivated to promote the digital economy of the 15 member countries of the regional economic commission of West Africa.

E. Participation in the UNCTAD workshop on e-commerce, 24-28 April 2017 in Geneva

6. This is the second time the Rapporteur has attended the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) E-Commerce Week. This time the AACE was invited to collaborate with UN/CEFACT in organizing a Special Session on the 28th, at the same venue, called "Single Window as an Enabler for E-Commerce Development".

7. The session involved the participation of the new Chairman of the AACE, Isidore Biyiha, and other AACE experts involved as speakers and moderator.

8. A new version of the Single Window implementation guidelines was launched during the event and hard copies of the guide were distributed to the audience.

9. The e-commerce week was attended by AACE and some of its members, Kentrade, the Conseil National des Chargeurs de Cameroun (CNCC), and GAINDE 2000.

F. Participation at the World Trade Organization 2017 Public Forum under the theme "Trade: Behind the Headlines", 26-28 September, Geneva

10. The Rapporteur was invited by the Minister of Commerce of Senegal to join the Senegalese delegation and to present on Senegalese digital trade facilitation initiatives in a special session dedicated to Senegal. There was a large attendance and the presentation was chaired by the Minister with the participation of senior customs managers.

G. Participation at the 30th UN/CEFACT Forum in Rome, 2-6 October 2017 (Italy)

11. During the Rome forum the Rapporteur actively participated in the session dedicated to Blockchain. A presentation was made by a Senegalese expert. During the forum the SSP recommendation project held its first meeting. A session focused on the review of another project related on the Core Principles of Single Window Operations, and many inputs were suggested. Morroco and Sengal participated for the African region.

H. Participation at the "Assises de la transformation digitale": the key to successful digital transformation, Abidjan, 27-28 November 2017

12. During this major African event on digital transformation, the Rapporteur was invited in (2 respective sessions) to address the issue of funding the digital economy of Africa, and trade facilitation issues in connection with the digital era. Remy Marchand was the moderator of the trade related session, where UN/CEFACT standards were discussed together with Blockchain logistics.

I. Participation at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference 11: Advancing Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade for sustainable growth, 11-13 December 2017, Buenos Aires, Argentina

13. The Rapporteur was invited by the Government of Senegal and the ICTSD to participate in a panel dedicated to e-commerce in the WTO negotiation. The discussion was very interesting, and many African delegations attended the session.

J. Participation at the UN/CEFACT symposium on Single Window and the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), Geneva, 30-31 October 2017

14. Invited by UN/CEFACT to speak, the Rapporteur and AACE attended the third symposium to discuss of some variations of Single Window implementations and how they align with the UNECE Recommendation 33 definition. A presentation was done by the Vice President in charge of Promotion. He shared with participants various AACE Single Window experiences.

K. Launch of the African Performance Institute

15. The Rapporteur for Africa launched a new initiative called the African Performance Institute dedicated to the digital transformation of Africa. A cycle of 6 high-level conferences were conducted in Senegal. One was dedicated to e-commerce, and the

Minister of commerce attended. The objective is to advocate for senior policymakers in Africa to make better choices regarding digital transformation and to increase the global performance of Africa.

III. Activities conducted by the African Alliance for e-commerce

A. Organization of the 8th AACE General Assembly on 14-15 March 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya

16. The AACE held its 14th Executive Committee and 8th General Assembly meetings from 14 to 15 March 2017 at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Nairobi Kenya, under the chairmanship of the AACE Chairman, Mr Ibrahima Nour Eddine DIAGNE and Chairpersons Mr. Isidore BIYIHA, Mr. Jalal BENHAYOUN and Mr. Amos WANGORA.

17. On the side-lines of the meetings, a workshop on trade facilitation was held. This forum was attended by diverse stakeholders from various public and private sectors. The major role that Single Window could play in the implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT) action plan were discussed.

18. These meeting resulted in the election of new office bearers (for a period of two years). The GUCE (Cameroun Single Window) Director General, Mr. Isidore Biyiha became the President of the AACE Executive Committee, while the CEO of KenTrade Kenya, Amos Wangora, was elected the President of the General Assembly. Representatives of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Morocco and Senegal were elected as Vice Presidents.

B. Participation at PACCI meeting May 22nd – 23rd, 2017, Addis Ababa

19. The Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI) organized a workshop under the topic "Enabling Cross Border Trade - Ways chambers of commerce can lobby in support of the Single Window".

20. This meeting was attended by delegates from the Republic of Congo, Madagascar and the Secretariat. Presentations on AACE e-commerce projects were made by representatives from the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

21. During the discussion, PACCI emphasized the importance of finding areas of collaboration with AACE.

22. The meeting brought together a wide range of participants, including Government officials, representatives from business circles, customs officials, corridor management, port authorities as well as representatives from related regional and international organizations.

C. Participation in the Port Management Association of West and Central Africa conference in Cotonou, 24-26 July 2017

23. AACE took part in the conference organized by the Port Management Association on the Single Window and Port Community System, held from 24 to 26 July 2017 in Cotonou, Benin.

24. The workshop was attended by GAINDE 2000[1] (Senegal), GUOT[2] (Republic of Congo) and GUCE[3] (Cote d'Ivoire). During the workshop, AACE made a presentation emphasizing the importance SW systems.

25. The conference aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the subject and assess the lessons learned from countries that have already deployed these tools (Single Window/Port Community System).

D. Participation at the 4th Technical Working Group meeting on interconnectivity of computerized Customs Clearance and Information Systems in Africa

26. From 31st July to 02 August 2017 at the Hilton Hotel in Yaoundé, Cameroon, the African Union Commission (AUC) invited AACE to the 4th Technical Working Group meeting on interconnectivity of computerized Customs Clearance and Information Systems in Africa. The meeting was attended by Morocco and Cameroon. A presentation was made on AACE projects which aligned with the main topics (e-commerce, Africa Trade portal, etc.).

27. During the discussion, the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the AUC and the AACE was discussed, and the AUC were informed that the revised version would be sent to Director Generals of the member states for further comments so that the MOU could be signed before the end of 2017.

E. Participation at the WCO workshop on Digital Customs and E-Commerce from 21 to 24 August 2017 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

28. The World Customs Organization (WCO) and Burkina Faso Customs Administration organized a Regional Workshop on Digital Customs and E-Commerce from 21 to 24 August 2017 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Cameroon represented the AACE and a presentation was made on SW and e-commerce platforms.

29. It is important to note that the AACE has been an active actor in the WCO e-commerce reflection since its first initial workshop on the topic.

F. Holding of the annual International Single Window Conference, from 3rd -5th 2017 at hotel Kempinki, Accra, Ghana

30. Organized by the Africa Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AACE), in partnership with the Ghana Community Services Network (GCNet), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), the official Opening Ceremony ocurred in the Kempisky Hotel, Accra. The programme line-up involved important dignitaries and was graced by His Excellency the Vice President of Ghana, Alhaji (Dr.) Mahamadu Bawumia.

31. Attended by more than 200 participants from various entities including public, private and partners (WTO, WCO, African Union (AU), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), WAEMU,

[1] The custom Single Window systems provider for Senegal.

[2] GUOT is the acronym for single window customs system used in Republic of Congo.

[3] The National Single Window for Foreign Trade in Ivory Coast.

Universal Postal Union (UPU), WEF, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN/CEFACT) the conference raised certain points related to the development of e-commerce, Single Window, and TFA implementation, such as:

- The need for a clear definition of community systems in order to address issues involved in all clearing services advocated;
- Modules of the SW Concept are explained, but there are different challenges in different countries which need to be defined;
- Governments must be fully committed with a sanctions regime instituted for users in order to move from SW to e-Commerce; the AACE should serve as relay to disseminate all these principles to member states;
- Technology is a key enabler and a key differentiator in the success of any supply-chain system. Its improvement is therefore a very important component in the global development of e-commerce;
- There is a need for an efficient address system if e-commerce is to succeed;
- A great challenge to internet connectivity is that data generated by Africa is given away freely; member states should begin to think about how the data generated can be equitably shared; data has become a lubricant for the global economy;
- Consider holding a stakeholder Business Processes Conference to deal with frustrations; a lot of Business Processes Engineers should come on board;
- The need for the integration of SW Concepts among member states should be emphasized;
- Border operation standards need to be harmonized; the need for one-stop border post is complex, but necessary;
- A legal framework is required to compel members to register and implement SW; only 22 AU members have registered;
- The integrity of platforms depends on the integrity of data; punitive regimes must be instituted to deter declarants from inputting incorrect data;
- Easy-to-use and secure payment systems (Banks, mobile phones) are an important component of efficient e-Commerce;
- There should be adoption regulations for e-commerce, both at the national and global levels;
- Change management is essential if operators are to survive in the dynamic world of e-commerce; attitudinal change is imperative;
- Efficient infrastructure is a fundamental requirement in order to harness e-commerce;
- It is important to invite government agencies responsible for postal services to be a part of discussions;
- Industry players should have no choice but to adopt global e-commerce solutions;
- A recommendation should be made for the establishment of one global hub where all the participating countries would sign on for e-commerce;
- There is a need to institute risk-management strategies to curb the incidence of illicit goods transportation;

- Consider the institution regulatory prohibitive policies to prevent the dumping of e-waste in Africa;
- Initiate programmes to connect Customs agencies to the relevant portals to make their work more efficient;
- Improve transport infrastructure to facilitate trade;
- Regional Integrations Communities (RICs) should dialogue to ensure unity;
- AACE should approach member states individually to dialogue for unity.

32. The AUC has agreed, in principle, that a framework for cooperation on e-commerce will be introduced as a subject in the second phase of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations. AACE is called upon to work with the AUC, ECOWAS, member states and Regional Economic Communities to contribute to the design of the e-commerce framework for cooperation.

G. Invitation to the Continental Dialogue on the contribution of Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) 23-24 October 2017, Yaoundé, Cameroon

33. African Alliance participated as speaker to the continental dialogue on the contribution of PTAs organized by the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC). A presentation focused on the AACE views on informal trade and how electronic systems could fight against informal trade practices.

H. UNECE-ESCAP-EEC International Single Window Conference, Moscow 7-8 December 2017

34. From 7 to 8 December 2018, AACE participated as speaker at the International Single Window Conference in Moscow. During that event AACE shared African perspectives on Single Window.

I. Participation at the meeting on the Electronic certificate of origin and TFA measures, Ouagadougou 20-23 November 2017

35. Following a study on the legal framework of the certificate of origin implementation, WAEMU Commission, in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC), organized a workshop to share the results of the study with all stakeholders involved in the electronic issuance of the certificate of origin. The meeting has enabled WAEMU and AACE to follow their common action plans to generalize the e-certificate of origin in the eight member countries.

IV. AACE Partnership with international organizations

A. African Union Commission (AUC)

36. Considering that AACE plays a central role in the promotion of activities related to trade facilitation and Single Window implementation in Africa, the AUC intends to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the AACE to strengthen the capacities of countries in their Single Window projects. This MoU should enter into force in 2018.

B. Afreximbank

37. Having the common objective of promoting intra-African Trade, the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) is in discussion with AACE in order to identify projects that both entities could implement together. During a meeting organized on side-lines of the Single Window Conference, held in Accra, the two organizations identified the e-commerce sector as an area for collaboration. Afreximbank is a Pan-African institution, established in 1993, whose objective is the financing and promoting of intra- and extra-African trade.

V. Project and perspectives in 2018 for AACE and African Performance Institute (API)

A. Generalization of the E-Commerce pilot project of WAEMU

38. Thanks to financial support from WAEMU, AACE will organize in 2018 the second step of the project. It aims to organize awareness workshops and set up the e-commerce platform in the eight of the member countries. The final objective of these activities will be to dematerialize the WAEMU certificate of origin in all eight countries by the end of 2018.

B. Extension of sensitization workshops on the concept of Single Window in six African countries belonging to the Least Developed Countries (LDC)

39. With the support of the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Trade Policy Centre, AACE will organize six awareness workshops on the Single Window concept in six African LDC countries. With the entry into force of the TFA, these workshops will be a framework for discussion of certain TF articles related to the agreement.

C. African Performance Institute

40. The African Performance Institute will continue its efforts in Senegal and will push for expansion into other African countries.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

41. The next year will be dedicated to the implementation of many regional projects and the continuation of the advocacy role of both AACE and API.